AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A semiconductor device including:

a semiconductor substrate having a main surface;

a semiconductor layer of a first conductive type which is formed on the main surface of said semiconductor substrate;

a first buried impurity region of the first conductive type formed between said semiconductor layer and said semiconductor substrate;

a second buried impurity region of a second conductive type ~~vertically~~ positioned ~~relative to the substrate~~ between said first buried impurity region and said semiconductor layer along a line normal to said main surface;

a first impurity region of the second conductive type which is formed in the surface of said semiconductor layer and which is electrically connected to said second buried impurity region;

a second impurity region of the first conductive type which is formed in the surface or inside of said semiconductor layer located in a region above said second buried impurity region; and

a semiconductor element which includes said first impurity region and said second impurity region and which has a switching function formed on the surface of said semiconductor layer,

wherein the withstanding voltage is secured by a depletion layer extending from an interface between said second buried impurity region and said semiconductor layer under the condition where said semiconductor element is turned OFF; and

said second buried impurity region includes a first gap part wherein said second buried impurity region is disconnected, said gap part of the second buried impurity region positioned directly beneath said second impurity region.

2. (Previously Presented) The semiconductor device according to claim 1, wherein said semiconductor element includes:

a third impurity region of the first conductive type formed on the surface of said first impurity region so as to be surrounded by said first impurity region; and

an electrode part formed over said first impurity region, said first impurity region sandwiched between said third impurity region and said semiconductor layer with an insulating film in between the electrode part and the first impurity region.

3. (Original) The semiconductor device according to claim 2, wherein said semiconductor element further includes a fourth impurity region of the second conductive type which is formed so as to contact with said second impurity region.

4. (Original) The semiconductor device according to claim 1, wherein said semiconductor element includes a fifth impurity region of the second conductive type which is formed on a surface of said semiconductor layer.

Claim 5 (Cancelled)

6. (Original) The semiconductor device according to claim 1, wherein said second buried impurity region includes a plurality of said first gap parts.

7. (Original) The semiconductor device according to claim 6, wherein said second buried impurity region includes a plurality of regions which are, respectively, made to be in an electrically floating condition by a plurality of said first gap parts.

8. (Previously Presented) The semiconductor device according to claim 1, wherein said first buried impurity region includes a recessed part wherein a surface of said first buried impurity region is recessed in the direction away from said second impurity region in a part located, approximately, directly beneath said first gap part or a second gap part wherein said first buried region is disconnected.

9. (Original) The semiconductor device according to claim 4, wherein a junction interface between said first buried impurity region and said second buried impurity region is uneven.

10. (Previously Presented) A semiconductor device including:

a semiconductor substrate having a main surface;

a semiconductor layer of a first conductive type formed on the main surface of said semiconductor substrate;

a buried impurity region of the first conductive type formed between said semiconductor substrate and said semiconductor layer;

a first impurity region of the first conductive type which is formed on the surface of said semiconductor layer and which is electrically connected to said buried impurity region;

a second impurity region of a second conductive type formed on a surface of said semiconductor layer located in a region above said buried impurity region; and

a semiconductor element which includes said first impurity region and said second impurity region and which has a switching function formed on the surface of said semiconductor layer,

wherein a withstanding voltage is secured by a depletion layer extending from an interface between said second impurity region and said semiconductor layer under the condition where said semiconductor element is turned off; and

said buried impurity region includes a gap part wherein said buried region is disconnected, said gap part of the buried impurity region positioned directly beneath said second impurity region.

11. (Previously Presented) The semiconductor device according to claim 10, wherein said semiconductor element includes:

a third impurity region of the first conductive type formed on a surface of said second impurity region so as to be surrounded by said second impurity region; and

an electrode part formed over said second impurity region, said second impurity region sandwiched by said third impurity region and said semiconductor layer with an insulating film in between the electrode part and the first impurity region.

12. (Original) The semiconductor device according to claim 10, wherein said semiconductor element includes a fourth impurity region of the second conductive type formed on a surface of said semiconductor layer.

13. (Previously Presented) The semiconductor device according to claim 10, wherein said gap part is formed in a part that is in the direction to which said depletion layer extends.